

INFORMAL CHAPLAIN GROUPS

A Research Project Presented to
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by

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PREFACE^a

After an initial discussion with the faculty point of contact, I undertook research on informal groups in the fields of management, organizational psychology, and sociology. As the research progressed, I included some study of small group behavior, personnel management, organizational development, and social psychology. These latter areas did not prove as fruitful for study of informal groups. Any study of "informal groups" would be incomplete without reference to the "Hawthorne experiments." In this connection I did study the basic report of these experiments by Roethlisberger and Dickson,^b secondary discussions of the experiments in numbers authors, with a brief look at a similar study on the executive level.^c

References to the concept of informal organization was very limited in Department of the Army publications available to me. The

^aThis preface is the required note on "methods of research" and therefore is outside the word limitation.

^bJ. Roethlisberger and William J. Dickson, Management and the Worker: An Account of a Research Program Conducted by the Western Electric Company, Hawthorne Works, Chicago (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939).

^cC. I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938).

Select Bibliography on Administrative Organizations does mention several books that do discuss informal organization and DA Pam 5-2 on "MAP-TOE" discusses the concept briefly.^d

In addition to resources available at the United States Army Chaplain School, the Fort Hamilton Adjutant General Library, and my own library (research and reference collections), Mid-Manhattan Public Library, and the Brooklyn College Library of the City University of New York.

Although this study could have been significantly broadened through extensive interviews and questionnaires, I was advised by the faculty point of contact that this would be outside the scope of the topic as assigned. Therefore, I applied the research to chaplain groups through reflection on personal experience as: a non-divisional unit chaplain on division dominated bases stateside and in Vietnam, a hospital chaplain on a training center dominated post stateside, a Division Artillery chaplain in a division in Vietnam, and a unit chaplain and administrative chaplain on a service school post in the United States.

^dU.S., Department of the Army, Select Bibliography on Administrative Organizations, Department of the Army Pamphlet 10-5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December, 1960) and U.S., Department of the Army, Improvement Tools for Soldier Managers: Management Practices in TOE Units (MAP-TOE), Department of the Army Pamphlet 5-2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February, 1972), pp. 3-4 to 3-5 and 3-11 to 3-12.

^eI did interview the Comptroller, Headquarters, Fort Hamilton Command, on October 29, 1973. He confirmed my impressions, which I had gained in the meagre findings in official publications.

The format is according to Kate L. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Chicago: The University Press, 1972).

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is a study of informal chaplain groups and their relation to the formal organization of an installation chaplain activity. In the introduction are definitions of key concepts used in this paper and a note on the kinds of groups in an organization. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: 1) identification of basic forces which influence informal group formation; 2) an inventory of informal groups possible within a chaplain activity; 3) a delineation of the various functions fulfilled by different groups; 4) an analysis of variables which affect the integration of the goals of the chaplain activity and the personal needs of the chaplains; and 5) a suggested procedure for establishing productive and collaborative intergroup relations among chaplains.

Group may be defined as a plurality of persons having a common identity, some feeling of unity, certain common goals, shared norms, communication among its members, standardized patterns of interaction, and some degree of interdependence.¹

¹George Theodorson and Achilles G. Theodorson, A Modern Dictionary of Sociology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969), p. 176.

Types of groups include: primary and secondary groups; formal and informal groups; in-groups and out-groups; horizontal and vertical; ethnic, kin, and locality; contrived, functional, peer, pressure, reference, social, etc.² In this study we are primarily interested in formal and informal groups.

A formal group is one whose structure and activities are rationally organized and standardized with definitely prescribed rules, goals, and leaders. A formal organization is "a highly organized GROUP having explicit objectives, formally stated rules and regulations, and a system of specifically defined roles, each with clearly designated rights and duties." An informal group is a group without formal group rules, goals, or leaders. "It is typically small, and often casually and spontaneously formed." Informal organization is the "system of personal relationships that develop spontaneously as individuals interact with a formal organization."³ Formal and informal structure are different from formal and informal groups. Informal structures (e.g. "best-liked" or "scapegoat") may occur in both formal and informal groups without relation to group membership.⁴

²Ibid., pp. 176-79.

³Ibid., pp. 177 and 287. See this work for detailed discussions of various types of groups.

⁴A. Paul Hare, Handbook of Small Group Research (New York: The Free Press, 1962), pp. 18-19.

INFORMAL GROUP FORMATION

Well trained managers spend years developing, promulgating, and interpreting objectives, charts, procedures, and regulations for their organizations. Despite efforts to provide for every exigency that may face the formal group, informal groups inevitably spring up. Even a highly structured organization with many rules and restrictions is still utilizing people, and human beings will not function like machines.⁵

The basic forces which influence the formation of informal groups are the same forces which perpetuate society.⁶ Organization has been defined as "the rational coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit purpose through a division of labor and a hierarchy of authority."⁷ That sounds like rules,

⁵ Ernest Dale, Management: Theory and Practice, McGraw-Hill Science Series in Management (2nd ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), p. 180; Edwin B. Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, McGraw-Hill Series in Management (3rd ed.; New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971), p. 442.

⁶ Robin M. Williams, Jr., American Society: A Sociological Interpretation (2nd ed., revised; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 483.

⁷ Edgar H. Schein, Organizational Psychology, Foundations of Modern Psychology Series (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), p. 104.

bosses, production, and paychecks; yet even in our cybernetic society, services are rendered and goods are produced only in relation to certain basic human needs.⁸

In Barnard's "Theory of Cooperation" is a succinct outline of the sociological interdependence of formal and informal organization.⁹ Informal groups are more dependent on such psychological needs as security and the sense of self-worth. They come into existence and continue only as long as they are fulfilling these psychological needs of individual groups members.¹⁰ This is true whether the need fulfillment is discovered in response to or reaction against the formal group, or through relationships incidental to the organization.

⁸ Roethlisberger and Dickson, Management and the Worker, p. 552; George Caspar Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950), passim, chaps. iii-vi.

⁹ Chester I. Barnard, "A Theory of Cooperation and Organization," in Some Theories of Organization, ed. by Albert H. Rubenstein and Chadwick Haberstroh (Revised ed.; Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., and The Dorsey Press, 1966), p. 98.

¹⁰ Roethlisberger and Dickson, Management and the Worker, p. 552; Schein, Organizational Psychology, pp. 31 and 36.

CHAPLAIN GROUPS

"It has long been recognized by the people actually doing the work that the organization of which they are a part does not really operate as prescribed by the manual, job description, or organization chart."¹¹ This realization is often the source of confusion, frustration, sometimes even resentment for organization members. An acquaintance with the phenomenon of informal groups could help chaplains thus confused and frustrated.

A first step to utilizing this concept in a chaplain activity might be to inventory the informal groups possible within that activity. Several possibilities that come to mind are as follows:

- 1) denominational (major faith groups, individual denominations)
- 2) common vocational interests (preaching, teaching, counseling, youth work, hospital work)
- 3) "pastoral" or "program" orientation
- 4) "movements" (liturgical, charismatic, "Jesus," "group")
- 5) common avocational interests (recreation, "drinking buddies," moonlighters, off-duty students)

¹¹Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, p. 441.

- 6) common goals in meetings ("task" or "maintenance")
- 7) drifters/climbers
- 8) reactionaries (authority hang ups, impasses in priorities or communication)
- 9) status quo/innovative or experimental; "liberal"/
"conservative?"
- 10) common background (geographic, ethnic, socio-economic, educational)
- 11) age, rank, marital status
- 12) living on post/off post
- 13) proximity of quarters/duty locations

The point is not whether either one or the other is universal or exists at all. The relative impact or life span of any group will vary from time to time and place to place.¹²

Informal organization exists from the highest to the lowest headquarters.¹³ Although some writers have questioned the psycho-social significance of informal groups in industry,¹⁴ to ignore them in a people-oriented operation like a chaplain activity is to play the ostrich.¹⁵

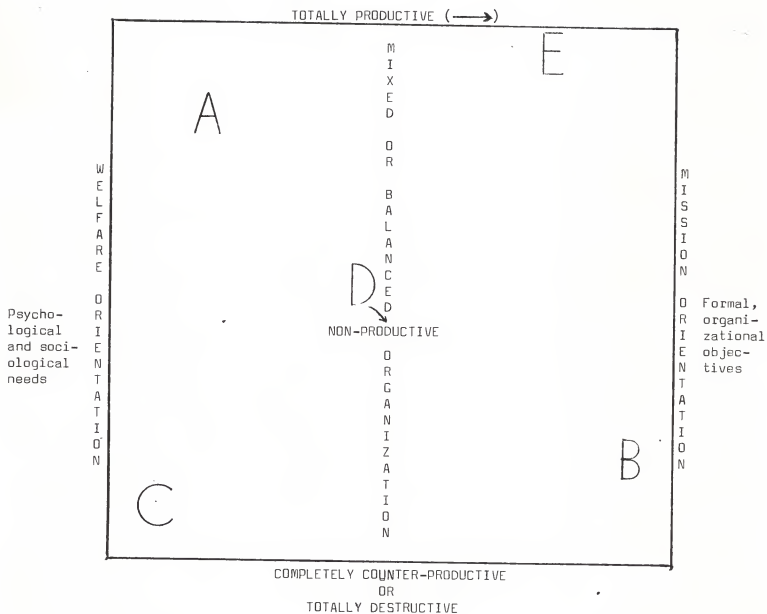
¹² Bernard M. Bass, Organizational Psychology (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1965), p. 225 and Schein, Organizational Psychology, pp. 82-84.

¹³ Barnard, The Functions of the Executive, pp. 223-24.

¹⁴ Amital Etzioni, Modern Organizations, Founders of Modern Sociology Series (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 46.

¹⁵ See Schein, Organizational Psychology, p. 31.

FUNCTIONS OF GROUPS



The preceding diagram has been designed as an aid to visualize all the possible functions fulfilled by various types of groups. Since this diagram is only two-dimensional, it can represent productivity only in terms of one set of objectives. Since this paper is emphasizing the relation of informal chaplain groups to the formal organization of an installation chaplain activity, the chart shows productivity in terms of the formal organization.

To assist in understanding the diagram I have plotted five possible groups.

Point "A" represents a clique more concerned about psycho-social needs than the objectives of the formal organization; however, this group's activities are essentially productive for the organization.

At point "B" is a formal chaplain activity which is highly organized, not designed for human needs, and in trouble with productivity.

Point "C" is an informal power group very interested in personal needs and counter-productive, maybe even destructive to mission accomplishment by the chaplain activity. (Since this chart is two-dimensional, there is no satisfactory way to indicate that this power group may be highly productive of some counter-establishment or counter-cultural goal.)

A good mix of personal and organizational needs might seem like a good group; however, a "perfect" balance, represented by point "D," seems likely to be non-productive.

Point "E" is my tentative plotting of a formal organization basically organized for the mission, cognizant of and responsive to personal needs, and highly productive.¹⁶

¹⁶See Schein, Organizational Psychology, especially pp. 36 and 84-85; Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, p. 441; and Roethlisberger and Dickson, Management and the Worker, especially pp. 551-52.

INTEGRATION OF GOALS AND NEEDS

Since informal groups were "discovered," many of those interested in management have tended toward two extreme positions. The strictest form of the Classical Theory of Administration or "scientific management" has operated as though informal organization did not exist.¹⁷ Divergence between set organizational patterns and experiential reality is seen as individual deviations from established standards. This is the predominant attitude expressed in official Department of the Army publications. The "organizational development" movement of the Human Relations school of management holds that informal organization is the only viable management reality.¹⁸

A staff chaplain concerned for an integration of the goals of the chaplain activity and the personal needs of the individual chaplains must deal with both formal and informal realities. He must be in touch with the environmental, membership, and dynamic factors of his activity.

Environmental factors include the physical, social, and professional climate of the activity and its several sub-groupings. A truly integrative environment is one which promotes the emergence of "logical

¹⁷ Etzioni, Modern Organizations, p. 20

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-21, 45-46.

groups."¹⁹ Here informal groups are seen, not as something "bad" to be avoided, or as necessary evils to be tolerated, but as necessary prerequisites for effective collaboration.²⁰

Membership factors involve the background, values, interests, and status of the assigned chaplains. ". . . for any effective work to occur, there must be a certain amount of consensus on basic values and on a medium of communication."²¹ Surveys could be run to determine these factors; but the Hawthorne experiments have taught us that few assumptions can be made from the findings of the psycho-social sciences alone about how groups will act or react without some testing of the data in the group in question.²²

The dynamic factors affecting integration include: how the groups are organized, the way they are led or managed, the amount of training individual members have received in group skills, the kinds of tasks undertaken by the groups, and their histories of success or failure.²³ Neither the informal chaplain group nor the formal chaplain activity

¹⁹ Schein, Organizational Psychology, pp. 32, 34, 86.

²⁰ Roethlisberger and Dickson, Management and the Worker, p. 559; see also Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, The Social Psychology of Organizations (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), p. 48; John D. Stanely, "Group Influence on Technological and Organization Change," Advanced Management, XXIII (February, 1958), p. 16; and Homans, The Human Group, pp. 48-49.

²¹ Schein, Organizational Psychology, pp. 86-88. Italics removed.

²² Roethlisberger and Dickson, Management and the Worker, pp. xi-xii.

²³ Schein, Organizational Psychology, p. 86.

is static, rigid, or unchangeable. Dealing with group dynamic factors can be both exhilarating and exhausting; to deny or to refuse to deal with those dynamics is bound to be confusing and frustrating.²⁴

For the person convinced of the importance of informal organization there is a temptation to neglect formal organization as irrelevant. The instability of informal organization makes this dangerous.²⁵ This is particularly true in a fluid military situation. For all its problems, formal organization is properly categorized as "adapted to yesterday's problems which are also presumed to be a large portion of tomorrow's tasks."²⁶

²⁴Nicos P. Mouzelis, Organization and Bureaucracy: An Analysis of Modern Times (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), p. 70; Justin G. Longenecker, Principles of Management and Organizational Behavior (2nd ed.; Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 345-56; Philip Selznick, "Foundations of the Theory of Organization," American Sociological Review, XIII (February, 1948), p. 30; Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, pp. 445-46; Timothy Costello and S. Zalkind, Psychology in Administration (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 429; and U.S., Department of the Army, Improvement Tools for Soldier Managers, pp. 3-4 to 3-5.

²⁵Dale, Management, pp. 285-87.

²⁶Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, p. 443.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS

When some degree of integration of organizational mission and individual needs has been attained, there is still the problem of establishing "conditions between groups which will enhance the productivity of each"²⁷

To do this requires a general knowledge of what caused the groups to form, who the members are, and what the groups' goals are. One way to accomplish this is to chart the informal organization of the activity. Such charting can reveal vertical relationships (association of a superior with a few subordinates), horizontal relationships (between peers), random relationships (friendships, social satisfactions, location, etc.), and relationships due to frequency of contact. Recognizing, naming, or regularizing the groups found may change their very nature, if not turn them into formal groups.²⁸

²⁷ Schein, Organizational Psychology, p. 96

²⁸ Flipppo, Principles of Personnel Management, pp. 452-54. An excellent use of this method as a training technique for managers and for analysis of an organization appears in Donald B. Vogel, "Analysis of Informal Organization Patterns: A Training Technique," Public Administration Review, XXVIII (September, 1968), pp. 431-36.

One classic intergroup conflict that frequently occurs among chaplains is the conflict of line (supervisory and operating chaplains) with staff. The "correct formal relationships" between line and staff are as follows:

- 1) Staff should advise rather than direct;
- 2) Staff should serve and not demand to be served;
- 3) Line should use and consult staff; and
- 4) Line should not unduly dominate the thinking of the staff.²⁹

There are built-in conflicts in the differences in types of personnel, the effect of staff work on line, staff methods of operation, and the reality that certain chaplains "wear several hats." Possible solutions to these conflicts that might be considered are line and staff rotations, staff/line accommodations, and education of each group in the "culture" of the other.³⁰

Finally, the staff chaplain who wishes to avoid the counter-productivity that may come from intergroup competition and conflict might follow some of the steps listed below:

- 1) Emphasis on the role of the sub-activities and groups of chaplains in all aspects of the installation religious program;
- 2) High interaction and frequent communication stimulated between groups;

²⁹Flippo, Principles of Personnel Management, p. 450.

³⁰Ibid.

3) Rotation of jobs and responsibilities among different chaplains;

4) Avoidance of any win-lose situation;³¹ and

5) Serious adoption of "management by objective."

An organization that thus determines to work together successfully for the good of all its members as well as for its corporate goals is likely to show the good results of "self-fulfilling prophecy."

¹³ Schein, Organizational Psychology, pp. 96-102.

CONCLUSION

Two kinds of organizational structures which acknowledge the existence of informal groups but do all within their power to nullify their effects are industrial assembly lines and Communist prisoner of war camps. A few recent military documents have moved from ignoring informal groups to creating opportunities for their formation, channeling the "groupings," and officially encouraging group identities.³²

From what management research and organizational psychology is saying, either such heavy-handed approach is bound to frustrate many organizational goals and make for a less than optimum working environment in an installation chaplain activity.

³²Fred R. Brown, ed., Management: Concepts and Practice, National Security Management Series (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1967), pp. 53-57 and U.S., Department of the Army, Improve-ment Tools for Soldier Managers, pp. 2-7 and 3-4 to 3-5.

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